

RATIONALISM AND MORALITY

Comparison and Analysis of Ethical Questions From a Christian and Freethought Point of View.

(By LOU LAWRENCE)

The relation between Rationalism and Morality has long been an absorbing question to my mind. By majority, I mean such conduct as is calculated to increase the sum total of human happiness. In ethics, as in all else, everything is relative. There is no Absolute Right; and conduct may be either good, or bad, as it is viewed from different points, or with reference to different individuals. Not to enter into a discussion of the Philosophy of Ethics, however; but considering the subject as governed by the plainest rules of right living—by the common and accepted estimate of morality, as founded upon justice and fidelity to self and others, we still have the question: Does Rationalism make men and women better citizens, better neighbors, better parents, better husbands and wives, or better friends, than does a belief in the Christian religion?

That a belief in the mass of Bible stories and the various tenets on which the many Christian sects are founded cannot be conducive to the most perfect morality is beyond question by any liberal thinker. Faith in the Vicarious Atonement never made man tell the truth. A belief in Virgin Motherhood is no argument for social purity. The manufacture of wine at Cana of Galilee is poor material on which to found a Prohibition campaign. But, at the present day, "Ministers of the Gospel," are prone to ignore religious dogma and fable, and to lay stress upon personal goodness; and it is a fact that many are influenced for their own good and the good of society by these teachings; and, while the teaching is purely ethical and not religious, it is done in the name of religion and at the expense of religious institutions.

To my mind, it seems perfectly reasonable that Rationalism, Naturalism, should have a greater influence for good than any system of supernaturalism. I do not mean that Nature, the sum total of phenomena, has, in its entirety, any more regard for human happiness than the Christian "God," but I do mean that when we have read supernatural interference with human happiness out of human affairs, we are better able to understand the effect of individual and social conduct. We are then in position and condition to realize that every act is at once a ~~cause~~ effect and a cause—an effect of past acts and present environment, a cause of future conduct and of present and future weal, or woe.

Realizing these facts, and that it is but the effect of conduct that makes it good or bad, it does seem that Rationalists have larger opportunity and greater incentive to apply reason to their manner of living and dealing with their fellow men, than do their Christian brothers, and that it behooves them to lay greater stress on moral character and less on theological belief. To those who care for nothing but to rid the world of all shades of religious superstition, this may not seem important; but to those who are wise enough to see that before we can hope to succeed in that attempt we must give the people an ideal to take the place of the ideals to which they so fondly cling, the subject certainly appeals for consideration.

The Christian says, "You must not steal, or lie, or you cannot go to Heaven," but the Rationalist can say, "You must not rob your neighbor, or lie to him because that would be conceding his right to rob and deceive you." Now, undoubtedly, the fear of present loss and deception will have much greater weight with the average man than any consideration for a heaven which is very unreal to even those who believe they believe in its existence. Thus the impetus given to moral instruction from a Rationalistic standpoint is much greater than when backed by nothing more than theological plantitudes.

In making the above comparison, I have implied the principle that we concede to our neighbor the right to treat us as we treat him. No system of morals will bear the light of criticism, or the tests of experience, which does not have this idea embodied in its fundamental principles; and no man, when he stops to think, can rightfully call himself a Rationalist, who does not apply the rule to every line of conduct.

"When he stops to think!" "Aye there's the rub." Now many of us ever stop to think about real practical morality—morality as it would be, if governed by that Reason of which we are so wont to boast? Is it not too true that most of us slide along in the conventional moral grooves which are supposed, though wrongly, to be of Christian origin? Is it not too true that we spend time and energy in an effort to correct the theological errors of others instead of looking sufficiently into the moral errors of our own lives? Will not a majority of us make greater effort to convince a Christian that the dogma of "Original sin" is preposterous than we would make to lift a burden from the shoulders of a brother Rationalist, or help him along on the way to health and happiness? We boast our superior intelligence in rising

above belief in "Special Providence," and ignore the consequences of our conduct and the effect of our example. We think and talk too much in the abstract. We boast that we "would not brutalize ourselves by crushing the worm at our feet," and at the same time, are we not as ready to crush to agony, a human consciousness as the most benighted Christian? Do we not wake earth and heaven with our outcries against the sins of the popes, priests and laity of past generations, and then fall in with the sins of our own? Are we more just, more truthful, more temperate, more candid, more sympathetic, more charitable, and more liberal than the average of the Christians around us? If we are not, if we practice the same shams, if we resort to the same deceptions, if we harbour the same jealousness, if we foster the same unjust greed, if we delude, crowd and crush our fellowmen, of what profit are all our boasted philosophies?

"O, but!" says one, "we have the truth about gods, heavens, hells and immortality. We know there never was a miraculous revelation. We know that the universe and all its phenomena are governed by law—is an unbroken sequence of cause and effect."

Very well, my brother, but what good is all this truth if it does not make you a better man than he who does not have it? Of what use is it to know that there is no heaven after death, if we proceed to take all the heaven out of this life? Of what use is it to know that there is no hell beyond the grave if we persist in adding our mite toward making a hell this side of it?

In my opinion, the time has come when the anti-Christian forces must stand for something more than mere opposition to theological error. A majority of the people have imbibed the idea that religion is progressive in its nature and has a perfect right to absorb the facts of science and adjust itself to modern knowledge. That the assumption is fundamentally false has little weight with the average thinker, because the average thinker, does not go into fundamentals. He believes in "the religion of today," and unless we who have the truth about god and so many other truths at our finger tips can convince him that the moral philosophy connected with our truths is on a higher plane than that connected with his religion, he is going to stick to his religion. And to convince him of its worth, that philosophy must be put into practice.

WHAT'S IN A KISS

When Kings Meet the Osculatory Contract is Like a Cow Pulling Her Hoof out of Mud Puddle.

From an international peace point of view the recent king-kaiser kissing feast may augur well, but there is not a well informed person in the great round world who will believe that the kiss was willingly given, actually enjoyed by the participants, or to be taken as an augury of brotherly love, save and except for the fact that both are engaged in the same game of bunko. Still the "lords of war" and "bounty feeders" appendages of an institution that has lost its value, if it ever possessed any, ought to have been carefully in their osculatory demonstrations. Suppose Edward had but recently dined off some of that English canned meat which experts say contain innumerable disease germs, there might have been a danger of fatality arising from contact. On the other hand, suppose William had but just got away with a hunk of Limberger cheese, the aroma that would be procolating through his molars must have been something fearful to contemplate.

It is an ancient custom emanating from mediaeval times that monarch should greet monarch with a kiss. It was a sign to the people of both countries that peace between them was assured, but history reveals the fact that many of these kisses were given in much the same manner as Judas is said to have kissed Christ in the garden of Gethsamene, a kiss of betrayal, of make-believe, a kiss of imposture, cunning and deceit. Voltaire said that he could not comprehend how it was possible for two priests to meet without laughing, presumably, in their sleeves, and no doubt kings kiss each other for similar reasons, and, because they have nothing better to kiss which would be far more preferable did the opportunity offer. As a matter of fact, if all reports be true, Edward has lavished innumerable kisses upon the dizzy females who came within reach during his younger days and one kiss more or less in his years that are sere and yellowed with age can make but little difference.

As a social rite the kiss is growing stale and unprofitable. It is flat and uninteresting. It is worse than using a community tooth-brush or swapping chewing gum. The dear ladies, when making social calls, use the kiss to deceive, an effort to make the recipient believe there is a keen delight and pleasure in the contact, whereas in truth it is not only propeptive of nausea, but the death of genuine sentiment. The custom of kissing the bride which still prevails in many communities professing not only civilization but the acme of aestheticism, ought to be abolished by law under severe pains and penalties. In

one of her previous articles Mrs. Ck had something to say on this subject which were both timely and pointed, and at that season the Blade thought and wondered why, a modest woman, who has done nothing worse than to marry, should be compelled to kiss a company of men and women and sample every kind of aroma arising from diseased stomachs. The preacher, or magistrate, who performs the ceremony usually claims the right to consecrate the first fruits of the Lord by planting a kiss on the ruby lips of the bride, and what he may chance to leave is given to the groom as sweet incense to a loving lord. If there is any truth in the theory of the medicists that disease bacilli lurks upon the lips of beauty, it would be well could such brides turn a herd of them loose at such a season and kill a dozen or more of those who dare to insult her by such methods.

Kisses, properly administered, are powerful antidotes for many of the ills of this life. Watch baby as it falls and receives some trivial injury. Mother rushes to it at the first cry and locating the point of injury covers it with her kisses and the infant stops its tears, struggles to get free and goes through the same process again and again. As between men and women a kiss should be a sacred thing. As between man and man, whether they be kings or subjects, it should be abolished as it is supremely disgusting. Properly taken on the installment plan, and when selected with care, a kiss is calculated to restore a misplaced appetite and make the blood to sing. Were it true that false Egypt kissed the cold lips of her dead Anthony, it were enough to have brought him back to life and love.

What's in a kiss? It is the seal of a genuine love, a token of sincere devotion, and should never be given unless prompted by the best impulses of the heart. It may not raise the dead, but it is an excellent tonic. The feeling of a kiss is best described by Byron as he pictures Mars lying with his head in the lap of Venus:

"Feeding on thy sweet cheek, while thy lips are
With lava-kisses melting while they burn.
Showered on his eyelids, brow and mouth as from an urn."

HOW CONGRESS COT THE AUTHORITY

To Donate Large Tracts of Land in the West to Corporations. A Good Answer to an Important Question.

(By JUDGE PARISH B. LADD)
I am just in receipt of a letter from A. B. Barrett of Beebe, Ark., in which he asks me where Congress got the authority to donate large bodies of land to corporations, and asked me to answer through your paper, which I do as follows. At the time of the formation of our government, the state of Virginia ceded to the general government the great north western territory, western boundary unknown. When our government purchased the territory of Louisiana from France, it was sparsely settled. The title to all the public lands by this purchase vested in the Federal Government. The same was true as to the public lands of Florida, where we acquired title to that country from Spain. Following this our general government acquired title to all the public lands ceded by Mexico at the close of our war with that Republic. By these various purchases and cessions the Federal Government acquired an absolute title to all the unclaimed lands from ocean to ocean, except as to Arizona, which fell to our government by right of discovery. Being the owner of this property the government, like an individual owner, could dispose of it by gift or sale, as it thought best and give a perfect title thereto. This is an inherent power belonging to all sovereign states. Besides the constitution confers on the General Government power to manage its property.

SOUND ADVICE

There's a cheery little proverb
It is very well to heed
In a world where pain and sorrow
Are quite plentiful indeed;
If you would not have them double
Then keep this well in view,
To never trouble trouble
Until trouble troubles you.

Don't think when clouds gather
You are certain to be drowned;
The very darkest tempest
May quickly blow around.
And up above the blackness
Shines evermore the blue;
So never trouble trouble
Until trouble troubles you.

Offtimes a gloomy morning
Precedes a sunny day;
So, without word of warning
Our trials slip away.
What pangs we oft have suffered
From ills we never knew!
So never trouble troubles
Until trouble troubles you.

Quit counting all the bridges
You may never have to cross;

Quit climbing all the ridges
Of future pain and loss.
Tread on and do your duty,
To you and conscience true,
And never trouble troubles
Until trouble troubles you.

GO UP THOU BALDHEAD

Modern Theories Anent Elijah and His Whirlwind and Elisha With His All Devouring Bears.

(By GEORGE VALE).

In beginning this story, I must remind my readers that the Old Testament is a mingling of allegory (a true story told in figurative sense), and parable (a story hidden under or within another apparently quite different, and parables were always written that only the initiated should understand their real meaning. And mingled with these is the history which called them forth. In order to understand these two parables, we must remember that the names of cities mean her only different conditions of the stock market. Beginning with the first of the second chapter of II Kings, we find the Lord (the baron), ready to send Elijah to heaven, (great wealth), by a whirlwind, (a figure used here to indicate the sudden destruction of the fortunes of some, in the sudden acquiring of wealth by others. Gilgal here means high prices in the stock market; and you will observe that Elijah and Elisha went down to Bethel. In other words they depressed the price of stocks to a certain point. "And the sons of the prophets (stock holders) that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him: Knowest thou that the Lord (the baron), will take away thy master from thy head today? And he said, yea, I know it, hold ye your peace." In reality, the stock holders who were in the secret, were tettering one another that the baron was about to assist Elijah in sweeping the market, and cautioning one another to keep the matter quiet, as they of course would share the prophets. There were fifty men in the secret, and when Elijah and Elisha had searched that point where they must choose between losing the great fortunes awaiting them, or repent of their cruelty in sweeping away the fortunes of others, which point is here called the river Jordan (river of repentance), they went over on dry ground (Shed no tears of repentance). Elisha noting the hardness of heart of Elijah, requested that he give him a double portion of his spirit. (Moderate call it gall). He was told that he had asked a hard thing, but was told also, "nevertheless if thou see me" it shall be so unto thee. The chariot, horses and horsemen of fire, are only a figure for the fire of selfish ambition, which enabled Elijah to secure the great wealth here called heaven. After Elijah's success, Elisha began to lead investors (The fifty mentioned, who because of their holdings were called "strong men") and who were to view (to see him). And they saw him, and they came eto meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him. (Helped to bring down the price of stocks), and they would have Elisha seek his master (the baron), for they said, "best peradventure the Spirit (of greed this time) of the Lord (the baron), hath taken him up and cast him upon some mountain (haht prompted him to raise the price of stocks) or into some valley (to depress the market). He at first refused, but finally consented, but they found him not (The baron would give them no tips). Jericho being the figure for stocks at a low price, the fifty complained that the water was naught (the well, which is a figure for investments from which an income is drawn as water from a well, was yielding nothing. "And he said, bring me a new cruse and has salt therein (salt is the Bible figure for money). And they brought it. (Deposited money with him for investment). And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there and said, "Thus saith the Lord, (the baron), I have healed these waters (made the investment profitable), there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land." And he went up from thence unto Bethel (the price of stocks was raised) and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children (persons seeking investments on the stock market, and called little children because of their innocence or ignorance concerning futures). And those wouldbe investors "mocked him," (mock means to imitate) invested in shares as he had done, and said unto him, go up thou bald head, Now the real bald head was a monkey, so called because of the tufts of hair on the sides of its head, giving the head the appearance of being bald on the top. At that time, there were, instead of bears and bevinas; bears and bald heads, for the bald heads could climb higher than the bears. And the investors were hoping that Elisha the "bald head", would carry the prices of stocks higher.

And he turned back and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord," (the baron ordered the prices of stocks lowered, which was done in his name, curse here meaning loss). "And there came forth two she bears, (two

women gamblers, on the bear side of the market, caded the wood, because its mysteries were hidden as persons might be in a forest), and tare forty and two children of them, (wrecked the fortunes of forty two investors). And he went from thence to Mount Carmel, (the price of stocks was again raised even higher than Gilgal), and he returned to Samaria (another point). Thus vanishes the story that was the terror of our childhood.

WHY IMITATE ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS?

Freethinkers do not Quote the Bible Fully When Discussing the Rights of Woman.

(By SUSAN J. PECK)

In their attacks on Christians and their complaints of "Bible marriage," Freethinkers even their women, freely quote such passages as shall lead their hearers or readers to suppose that the Bible contains nothing else, and surely nothing better; and invariably omit those which all in support of the rights of woman. That the state and the church have taken advantage of such deceptive arts to enslave both women and men I do not deny, but that the Bible when quoted in full given nothing better I do deny most emphatically. Following is a quotation from Peter III, which is at present going the rounds of the liberal press, having for its object the instruction of women as to their helplessness because of the contents of the Bible, and which quotation they give only in part, but which I shall finish. "Likewise ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands," "But let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptable, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." I John iv. 8. "God is love." I Peter III. 7. "Likewise ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessels, (weaker physically), and as being heirs together (equals) of the grace of life." Eph v. 23. "For the husband is the head of the wife even (in like manner) as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the Savior of the body," which makes the husband's office that of Savior of the wife's body. Her body is to be saved by him from overwork, from cold, hunger and disease, from assault, from the enforced maternity or its equal crime of abortion so prevalent in our day, from

insult or undue familiarity that only from others, but especially from himself. In support of this last assertion, I quote I John iv. 18: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." No wife with such a husband needs fear him, even as a tempter, for Rom. xiii. 10. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Such a husband in fulfilling the law of love, is being prompted by "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptable." And we read in Eph v. 28, 29, "He that loveth is wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: (by saving it from abuse). Again I quote I John iv. 16, "God is love." Men prate of the mother love as if it were sufficient to save the world and as if mothers could perform men's duty to mankind in addition to their own. Let them learn what love means as mothers know, before they dare say, "There is no God." The definition of the word honor is in part, "To reverence; to manifest the highest veneration for; in words and actions; to entertain the most exalted thoughts of; also "Reverence, veneration, or any act by which reverence and submission are expressed."

Now sisters what better support do you need than is to be found in the New Testament? In my opinion husbands will never be "always suitors," and wives "always sweethearts," until the idea that familiarity makes happiness has been eliminated from the human mind and men and women can content themselves with the joy of living under the same roof, and no amount of education, law or lack of law, can bring about their freedom, until all are come to understand that the act of generation is a sacred one, which under no circumstances, and between no parties whether married or single and under no amount of pressure known as passion, should be performed for any purpose but that of generation, for that purpose it was given and for no other.

Psalms xlii. 6. "A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this," but animals understand it."

General as adultery and its fool sisters seduction and prostitution, I have often in contemplating the situation found excuse for many men who seek the society of women outside their own homes, and who I believe do so at first from no base motive, but because of a real heart hunger which can be satisfied only with what is pure and clean, and because the pure and clean is not to be found in their own homes, at least only for the stranger. Such vile language as some wives use in conversation with their husbands, simply because they are

their husbands, as is most sure to result in that contempt bred of familiarity and which must end in driving husbands abroad for "a breath of fresh air," and indeed the same longing drives the wives of men of careless speech and act, to admit the acquaintance or "friend" to their homes, where because of their false education there is danger to both.

THE HISTORY OF RELIGION

Meaning of the Word, Consecrate" and Its Application to the Central Figure Of Christianity.

(By SUSAN J. PECK).

A part of Webster's definition of the word Consecrate is, "To enroll among the gods, as a Roman emperor." Any man then as I have written, who was both the recipient whether merited or unmerited of the title Jesus, and who was also the son of an emperor or king, was called the Son of God; while a man who rose from the masses receiving such titles, was called the Son of man, and if he merited, because of his honesty, the title Jesus, his cause, being that of the common people, was mentioned as the cause of the Son of Man. Mark. xiv. 62 "and ye shall see the Son of Man (representative of the people) sitting on the right hand of power." The right hand meant the state, and the left hand the church. The house of Lords, and the house of commons in England, illustrates the difference between the Son of God and the Son of Man. As there were many false Jesuses and false Christs, it often happened that those who rose from among the people only pretended to espouse their cause, while others were true.

I shall soon begin to separate the teachings and acts of the different Sons of God and Sons of Men as I find them in the New Testament. But first we must understand that the different compilers at different times and under certain directors, who, for their own purpose required it, employed not only expansion, interpolation, addition and omission, but transposition (often indicated by the use of the paragraph), which gave us a book in which the records of the acts of its many characters are so mingled, or absorbed one by another, as to mislead the casual reader, which was the purpose of its existence.

As an example of this transposition we have in Luke, the name "Cesar Augustus," instead of Augustus Cesar.

As the people in different times, in different places, were followers of tervt Jesuses and different Christs, under the existing conditions,

with one another as to which of their leaders was greatest, each nation cng their particular one the only true e, and all the others false; even as they do today. And as the false ones wei striving only for worldly wealth and power, their teachings regarding heaven, related to the acquiring of that same wealth and power. While the real friends of the people, as such friends always did and always will, taught that heaven is the combination of bodily comfort and health and mental tranquility, resulting from a sense of duty performed and conscience heeded.

In evidence of their teachings in the self government of the individuals, we have II Cor. xiii. 5 "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ (the conscience) is in you?" In other words, know ye not how that you may develop within yourselves a Jesus Christ? Romans xiv. 5, "One man esteemeth one day above another another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Col. II. 16, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days." Gal. v. 1.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. I John v. 6, And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. II Cor. iii. 17, Now the Lord, the ruler within man, is that Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

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METHODS:

The Organization into a Political Body.

OF ALL MEN AND WOMEN WHO WOULD MAINTAIN THE PURELY SECULAR CHARACTER OF THIS GOVERNMENT—

1. By defending the freedom of speech and press in local courts and before legislative bodies.
2. By likewise resisting all encroachments of ecclesiasticism upon the State.
3. By uniting with and assisting individuals and societies of whatever creed or party, when unjustly persecuted for religious and political expression or belief.
4. By preventing the corrupt reign of monopoly and partisanship through Direct Legislation by the Initiative and Referendum.
5. By advocating equal rights and justice to all—giving women an equal voice in all governmental affairs, and by all other practical and legal methods, maintaining personal liberty, just economic conditions, and all other essentials upon which a secular and free government must rest.